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# LITTLE MARJORIE'S LOVE-STORY

BY

MARGUERITE BOUVET

Illustrated

*By HELEN MAITLAND ARMSTRONG*



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1891

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“MARJORIE SAT NEAR AT HIS FEET  
LOOKING AT HIM.”

LITTLE  
MARJORIE'S  
LOVE STORY.

*by*  
MARGUERITE BOUVET.  
*With illustrations by*  
HELEN MAITLAND ARMSTRONG.

A.D

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*“Life, I repeat, is energy of love,  
Divine or human; exercised in pain,  
In strife and tribulation, and ordained,  
If so approved and sanctified, to pass  
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.”*



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# LITTLE MARJORIE'S LOVE-STORY.



## CHAPTER I.



**S**HE WAS always called Little Marjorie in the pretty village where they lived. Perhaps it was because she was such a frail and delicate little girl that she still lives in the memory of those who knew her as a little child. But although Marjorie never grew to be a woman, there was in her life the one thing that makes people great; and that is loving some one better than one's self. There was in her heart the strong pure love that has made heroes in the great world; and in her short years she experienced the sorrows

and yearnings of a life-time. There are persons who are born to sorrow, and who have suffering as their only heritage here on earth ; and yet they are good and loving, accepting all their ills with a gentle spirit, and bearing them with brave courage. It was just so with Little Marjorie. She was a sweet, hopeful child ; she did not grieve for the blessings she had not, — she lived only to make others happy.

When Marjorie was a very little girl, she had lived in a strange and distant country ; and she had now only a dim remembrance of a home where she had once been happy with those who loved her, — a home that seemed so fair and beautiful, as she looked back to it through her years of loneliness, that it appeared like some dreamy fairyland. She had but a faint recollection of a handsome young

father who had suddenly been taken away from them, and of the dreariness that



followed; of her pretty mamma looking so pale and sorrowful, and how the smile had gone from her lips, and the roses

died out of her cheeks, and how thin and worn she grew, until she too had faded away and died. But Marjorie remembered only too well that after all this had happened she was very miserable, and wept bitterly for many days, when she found that she was alone in the world with a little baby-brother scarce a year old.

But this baby-brother was a sweet comfort to Marjorie; for he was a darling little child, with a beautiful, innocent face, and eyes the color of heaven. He was always smiling and cooing at his little sister, and looking up into her tearful face with great inquiring eyes, as if to ask why she was always sad. Marjorie could not tell him. He was too little to know what had happened, or to understand what a great loss had just come



“HE WAS ALWAYS SMILING AND COOING AT HIS LITTLE SISTER.”



to them both. And so he prattled on in his sweet little voice, and frolicked about in the sunlit fields like a gay butterfly; and as long as he had his “sweet Marjorie” with him, and could run up and smile at her, and lay his little head in her lap when he grew tired, he was quite happy.

One day—Marjorie never quite knew how it came about—they found themselves in a pretty village of France. It was a very strange place to them; but it was a beautiful little village, and Marjorie felt that she would love it, for she loved all that was beautiful. There were high mountains sheltering it on one side, and on the other the waters of a deep-blue lake laughed and sparkled in the sunlight, and wrapped themselves about the little town like fond protecting arms. It was

early summer, and the air was filled with the songs of the birdlings, and laden with the first breath of the flowers. The fields and the mountains were green, and the lake and the sky were blue, and the gold sunlight fell over it all so peacefully that Little Marjorie was almost happy.

They lived in a pretty cottage close to the foot of the mountain; and all summer long its roof and porches were covered with wild vines, and tall green poplars kept watch around it like faithful sentinels. There was a little garden, too, and a little garden gate with sweet-brier climbing over it, — a delightful little swinging gate, where Gerald and Marjorie loved to stand and watch the country people in their gay caps, going by to the market-place. The house was a very



MARJORIE AND HER BABY-BROTHER.



little house, and everything in it was little from Marjorie and her baby-brother to Mademoiselle herself who lived with them. Mademoiselle was a strange little lady indeed. She seldom spoke to any one, and no smile ever lighted her pretty face. She had a young face; but her hair was very white, and her eyes were sad with weeping. Marjorie wondered why it was so, and why Mademoiselle was always dressed in black. She did not know that Mademoiselle mourned for a great loss day and night, and year and year; that her heart was desolate. She did not know that when Mademoiselle was a very young girl she had loved Marjorie's papa, and that he had gone far away, promising to come back for her in a year; that when the year was gone something had happened, and Mademoi-

selle had shut herself up in the little cottage, and vowed that she would live alone always, and never love a thing or creature any more. But the people of the village remembered it all very well, and they pitied her when they thought what a bright, happy girl she had once been. Yet when she heard of these two little souls left alone in that strange, distant country, her heart was softened,—for the sorrows of others sometimes make us grow kinder,—and she went after Marjorie and the baby Gerald, and brought them home with her.

When she saw the comely boy, with his sweet face and innocent smile and his great soft eyes, she felt a strange cold ache about her heart. She took him in her arms, and touched her lips to his forehead, and called him a little angel





from heaven; for Gerald had his father's blue eyes, and Mademoiselle had loved blue eyes dearly. But when she looked at Marjorie — poor, frail, little Marjorie — she did not kiss her; for Marjorie had her mother's dark eyes, and Mademoiselle did not love dark eyes. She only laid her thin white hand on the little girl's cheek, and said "Poor little soul!"

Marjorie remembered it always, — that cold, cheerless greeting. She wondered secretly why it was that no one ever said pretty things to her, but always "Poor little soul!" Perhaps it was because she was so different from her handsome little brother. He was full of life and beauty and color, and his little face was like a living flower. He had long silken curls the color of gold, and his eyes were like deep violets. His

voice was sweet and ringing, and his laugh was always merry; and he seemed to carry with him only sunshine and happiness.

But Little Marjorie had not even the beauty of youth in her face. She was white and thin, and her large eyes were full of sadness, — a strange, expectant sadness, as if she saw the future ahead, and saw too that it held no joy for her. There are eyes like Marjorie's, plenty of them in the world, — eyes that seem to reflect the yearnings of the whole human race; young eyes that tell of tears unwept, and hopes forever lost. Marjorie's eyes had her short history written in them. When she looked up there was a world of pathos in that dark, tender gaze, so that one fell to pitying her without knowing why.

Poor little Marjorie! She was not long in finding out what to her seemed a great misfortune, — the misfortune of having no beauty. She had a keen, sensitive nature to make her realize it, to make her feel that every word and look she got was one of cruel pity; and because of her tender years she reasoned as the young in sorrow do. She had not learned that there is a beauty which surpasses all human loveliness, — the beauty of an earnest, loving soul, to possess which is to be eternally blessed. Marjorie did not know in how great a measure she possessed this blessing; few people did, until after the short course of her life and love was run. She only knew that she had lost the one thing that seemed to endear her little brother to her, and to all who looked upon him.

“No one loves me,” she would say to herself, “because I am sad and ugly! No one loves me but the dear baby, and perhaps he too will know some day — and then —” And she would cover her face with her hands, and sob and cry bitterly.

But nearly always at such times, the little Gerald would run up to her, and put his little arms about her neck, and kiss her so tenderly, and talk to her so sweetly in his baby way that Marjorie would scold herself for being foolish, and promise him that she would never cry again as long as she had him to comfort her. But she did, oh, so many, many times as the years followed one another, and the cherished brother grew out of babyhood and beyond the pale of her tender love.

It was in these lonely days that Marjorie bred and nurtured the love for her little brother that makes her simple life eloquent, and that is a love so true and pure and beautiful that there is none other like it in all the world. His sweet innocence, his helplessness, his childish faith in her, and above all his wonderful beauty appealed to all that was truest and tenderest in her nature; and she responded to it with the ardor of a young and solitary heart.





## CHAPTER II.

*ery* SOON—and it is surprising how soon this change takes place—the little boy grew amazingly tall, so that Marjorie was fain to call herself his little sister, instead; and he grew so wise and knowing that Marjorie often pretended to stand in awe of him, and Gerald was very proud and pleased with his new dignity. Young though he was, he had learned that he held the power to make others love and admire him; and unconsciously he made use of this power to gratify his childish vanity. He felt, too, that his sister Mar-

jorie lived for him only; and like all those who are too freely blessed with love, he little knew the worth of his great blessing. Too often, alas! in place of the baby caresses he had been wont to give her, would he repay her tender devotion by thoughtless, unkind words. He thought nothing of wounding Little Marjorie's feelings, because she was patient and forgiving, because she was defenceless and weak,—weak in everything but her love for him.

Gerald was still the same beautiful child, with handsome features and radiant eyes that charmed every one. His artless grace, his childish yet imperious ways, his fresh, delightful voice carried with it a sort of subtle enchantment, which made it impossible for one not to be fond of him. Marjorie worshipped

his every act, and was happy only in serving him. True, it was but a sensitive, uncertain pleasure, that very little often changed to pain ; for Marjorie loved Gerald blindly, unreasonably, perhaps, with the youthful passion that knows no guidance or restraint. But it is possible — thank Heaven ! — to love unwisely and to have sublime feelings withal ; to recognize in those who are dear to us only the fair virtues that have enslaved our hearts, and in the end to be made wiser and nobler by the lesson of patience and self-sacrifice. And childish love is such a simple thing, and yet so powerful that all things evil must vanish from the heart where it abides.

As they grew older Little Marjorie became conscious of a new influence that had come over Gerald, — a vague, indescribable something that seemed to be



“THEY STILL PLAYED TOGETHER IN THE LITTLE GARDEN.”



drawing him away from her and transforming him into a strange, fanciful boy, with great ideas of doing something wonderful in the world, and with such improbable hopes and dreams that she was often troubled. They still played together in the little garden, and talked together under the shadow of the tall elms, or wandered out in the quiet wooded lanes, as in the days of their babyhood; but Gerald was divided from Marjorie by a barrier of dreams; and even while they walked hand in hand she felt that she was alone, that he was living quite apart, with a soft misty veil barring her, and indeed, every one else, from his fair, beatified world.

For a long time they lived in this quiet lonely way, how long Marjorie could not say; but it seemed a brief enough period

to her when she looked back to it in less happy days, and remembered it as the sweetest time in her life, and blessed it. For then she had her darling always with her, and his presence was the dearest joy of her life. The thought of being parted from Gerald had never come to her. She could not fancy what her life would be without him. In all their dreams of the future,—and Gerald's were great and many,—he had always spoken of her. She should be near him; she should have a share in all his good fortunes; she should be great in his greatness; she should have cause to be proud of him, for he meant to be powerful and wealthy and all that makes men happy in this world. And Marjorie—faithful, trusting, Little Marjorie—lived in that flitting hope, and in the

assurance that whatever Gerald might be to the world he would never be to her but a generous, affectionate brother.

In the spring, when the days were warm and lovely, they spent the mornings together on the shores of the pretty lake. It was quiet and lonely there; and they seemed to find something genial in the calm, changeable beauty of the blue waters. They could talk or think as was their mood; they could listen to the murmur of the waves as they came lapping up on the shining sand, and fancy that they were saying all sorts of pleasant things, or perhaps sad things, if the day was a dark one. They watched the distant boats, with their white sails moving beneath a canopy of gilded clouds; and their thoughts, each so different, wandered out to that land of purple

mystery, which children see in a fair horizon. Gerald looked upon it as a vision of his future,—that future which held so much for him; and his fancies would take such wayward flights that often Little Marjorie could not keep pace with them. It was then more than ever that she was filled with that strange new thought, and became oppressed with a vague dread that something, she knew not what, was separating her from the brother she loved. Sometimes, too, these sad misgivings were confirmed by a careless or unkind word or an angry look, which meant nothing to him when it was given and forgotten, but which sank deep into her troubled soul, and would not be effaced.

Gerald was full of moods; yet he could not bear that Marjorie should indulge in



“IN THE SPRING, WHEN THE DAYS WERE WARM AND LOVELY, THEY SPENT THE MORNINGS TOGETHER ON THE SHORES OF THE PRETTY LAKE.”



any mood' that was not his own. If she was sad and anxious, he would often mistake her thoughts, and grow fretful and restless, and upbraid her for being such ill company.

"Why don't you talk and laugh with me, Marjorie?" he would ask, impatiently. "It is so lonely and dreadful in this place, I wonder you do not do something to amuse me."

"I will, dear, I will do anything to please you, if you will tell me what."

"Tell you what! just as if I knew. I don't care what, only don't sit there looking so cross and solemn. You don't look pretty when you do."

"I am not cross, Gerald; you know I should never be cross with you," and Marjorie would smile at him sweetly.

“That is what you always say; but you are cross, Marjorie, and ugly sometimes, and I don't love you, and I shall not let you come and live with me when I am a man.”

“Oh, don't say that; you would never be unkind to me, Gerald! Everything will be different when you are a man; you will be great, and I shall be too happy ever to look sad.”

Then Gerald would look better pleased, and would add, in a half playful, half earnest tone,—

“But you are not beautiful, Marjorie; you will never be beautiful like me.”

“I do not know why it is, except that no one is so beautiful as you, I think. But you will always love me, dear, just as much?”

“I would love you better if you were beautiful.”

“Oh, no, you would not, for beautiful people are not always good, Gerald; but you are beautiful and good; you will always be beautiful and good to me.”

“Yes, I will be good to you, Marjorie,” and Gerald would look at her with a little air of condescension and majesty; and then she would throw her arms about his neck, and smile at him with such a tender light in her eyes that his childish heart would be conquered, and he would kiss her, forgetting that she was not beautiful, and tell her that she was his dear Marjorie still.

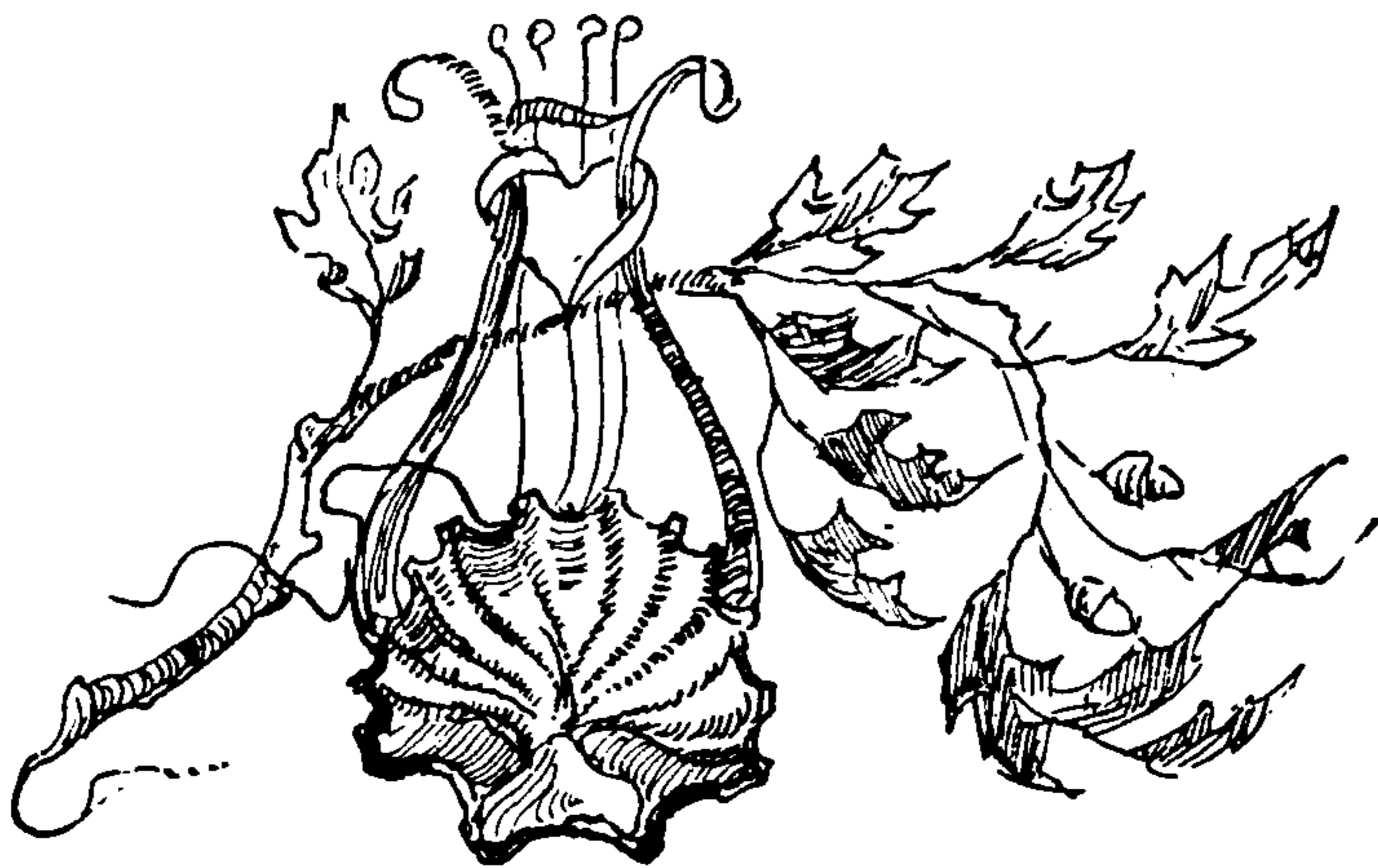
But as time went on these little scenes between them grew more frequent and more serious; and Marjorie would think long and sadly over them when she was

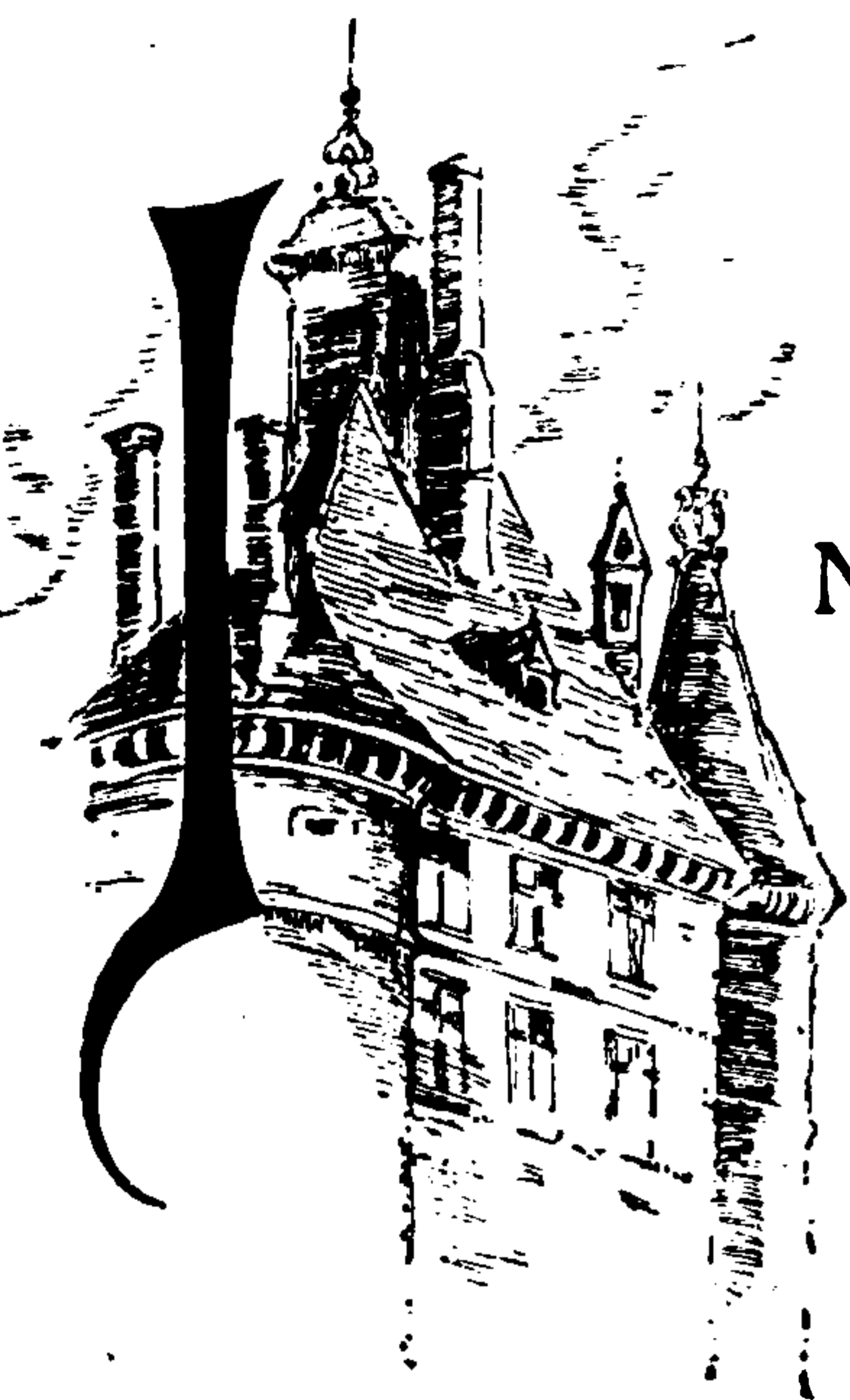
left alone, and she would ask herself what it was that barred her out of the world in which her darling lived. Marjorie's sphere of comparison was small; but she knew very well that Gerald was fair to look upon, that there was a magic charm in his childish face, which made people turn to look at him, and stop to listen to the ineffable sweetness of his simple songs. She knew that he had the gift and power to draw people to him, while she had nothing,—nothing but a heart full of love to pour out for very need of love. And sometimes when her little soul grew weary with doubt, she would go to Mademoiselle and ask to be comforted; for Marjorie was a very young and very human little child, and the young have need of sympathy. But Mademoiselle could give no comfort; she herself

had found none in life. She had lost the most precious thing on earth,—the only thing that gladdens a whole life; and her heart was like a cold and barren land upon which the sunlight never falls.

Gerald knew nothing of the thoughts that troubled his little sister Marjorie, of the tearful hours caused by his heedless care of her. He was full of himself, of his own thoughts and hopes, proud of his beauty; and above all he was conscious of the rare gift which he possessed,—the gift of a heavenly voice. He lived in the certainty that sometime through this gift he would rise out of himself into the realms of his beloved fancy. Gerald, notwithstanding his human faults and weaknesses, had in his nature that spark of divinity which is called genius. Hence what was all the rest to him? To

live always in the little village, to sing for Mademoiselle, and to be rewarded with one of her rare smiles, to be loved by little Marjorie was a kindly fate, perhaps, for one with quieter hopes; but for Gerald, there was something beyond this,—a life of triumph and glory, the very thought of which filled him with a nameless joy. In that lonely childhood, Gerald was not unhappy; he had the solace and refuge of a great hope. But little Marjorie had no hope save in him.





### CHAPTER III.

I N the village where Gerald and Marjorie lived, there was an old chateau close to the shore of the laughing lake,—a strange, gray chateau, whose great windows reflected at evening the glory of the crimson summer sun. Gerald had often seen it so, clothed in fiery splendor, and he had been wont to look upon it as a sort of enchanted palace, where wonderful things might happen. He fancied he would like to visit the gray chateau some time. He had been past it with Marjorie so many times, in the bleak winter when the white snow mantled its quaint roofs, and in the pleas-

anter spring-time when the young vines clambered up its walls, and it had never ceased to hold for him that weird fascination, which mystery and antiquity have for romantic natures. He had said to Marjorie that he knew some time he should really go into the château, and it would be a great day for him. And Marjorie had smiled her assent in his belief, though she did not quite know how such a strange thing might come about; for none of the villagers ever entered the château, and Monseigneur, the only person who was known to live there, was such a grim and curious personage that all the little children round about were greatly afraid of him.

Still, upon a certain afternoon, when the breath of summer was gone, and the

roses had all died, and the trees were naked of their leaves, Gerald and Marjorie were out on the white strand gathering sea-shells by the lake. Gerald was silent, and Marjorie had ceased trying to amuse him. It was one of his gloomy days; he felt that the whole world was dark and lonely, and that the little village was the darkest and loneliest place in it. He looked up and saw a flight of autumn birds winging their way towards the pleasant South, and a sigh rose to his lips.

“I wish I were one of them,” he said; “I wish I were one of them, and could fly away, away so far!”

“And where would you go?” asked Marjorie, with her half anxious, half hopeful look; “where would you like to be, dearest?”

“Somewhere, anywhere but here. I am sick of this place, of everything in it. Do you see those little white boats yonder, Marjorie, with their masts rising out of the water? I should like to be in one of them, and sail away to some unknown land and never come back.”

“With me, Gerald, with me to go with you?” whispered Little Marjorie.

“Yes, yes, if you are good. I wish it were now, don’t you, Marjorie?”

“Oh, yes! but it shall be some day.”

“Some day is too long to wait,” said Gerald, fretfully.

“We cannot think of it yet, love, we must not think of it. You are too young; we are both too young to go out alone into the world.”

“What a foolish girl you are, Marjorie; you do not know anything about it.

Great people are never too young, and they are never alone. I shall be great some time. I shall be the greatest singer in all the world, and I think it must be soon. And you may stay where you please if you are afraid to trust me."

He spoke quickly, and there was a strange bitterness in his words, something unnatural in a young voice and perfectly incompatible with the angelic fairness of his face.

"Oh, no; no! it is not that, you know it is not that!" pleaded Marjorie. "I would go anywhere in the world with you. I am afraid of nothing when you are near me, Gerald."

"Then don't talk as if I were a baby and needed some one to look after me, else I shall want to go away from you too."

Marjorie laid her hand gently on his arm and was silent; for she saw the look of discontent which she dreaded gather slowly over his brow, and rest upon it like an evil shadow. It was an alien look that for a moment eclipsed all the beauty of the young face. Marjorie watched him sorrowfully, but he took no more notice of her; he only walked on a little faster, as if wishing to be left alone, and remained long buried in his own thoughts.

At length they neared the gate of the old château. Gerald stood for a moment gazing at its gray walls and peaked chimneys and the wreaths of misty smoke that enveloped it, making it look still more weird and ghostly. He sat down upon a broken rock and began to sing, while waiting for Marjorie who had followed slowly, gathering pretty leaves by

the way, that she might not disturb his mood. But when she came nearer, it was no longer the same Gerald who sat there with his head leaning against the gray rock,—the moody, restless boy who had spoken harshly to her but a moment gone; it was another being, a creature from heaven, it seemed, whose clear voice rose in pure melodious notes and filled the whole air about him,—a voice that seemed to be singing away the tumult of a wayward, troubled soul. Gerald always sang so in his darkest moments. When his heart was filled with vague longings, when the unlovely side of his nature rose up in him and would not be conquered, he would pour forth all its bitterness in one long burst of rapturous song and be absolved. It was his prayer for forgiveness. Marjorie stood still and

listened to the rich sweet music; for it was then that Gerald sang with all the depth and strength of a music-loving soul. She had learned that his music was sacred; and she knew that the flood which came from his lips was like a healing balm. She only wondered that heaven itself was deaf to that voice, and that it stretched no hand to help and lead her darling.

It was very strange. Marjorie never forgot it: how she had scarcely shaped the thought when the big gate of the château opened, and Monseigneur stood beneath the gray archway, his grave eyes filled with astonishment, looking at them both. Little Marjorie would have run away and hidden herself if she had been alone; but Gerald was afraid of nothing. She waited what seemed an



“WHO IS THIS SINGING AT MY GATES UNBIDDEN, WITH A VOICE LIKE  
THAT OF A SERAPH ”



endless time, wondering what would happen. And then she remembered how quickly her heart began to beat when she saw Monseigneur actually crossing the little path and coming straightway toward them.

Gerald was not startled; he only stopped suddenly, and his eyes grew calm and beautiful as with the lingering sweetness of the unfinished song. But Monseigneur was greatly puzzled. He could not believe that this slender boy before him, with the face of a child, had a voice that had pierced the thick walls of his château, and brought him out to listen.

“And who is this?” he said at length, raising Gerald’s face to his; “who is this singing at my gates unbidden, with a voice like that of a seraph?”

Gerald did not answer; but a sudden rosiness rushed to his cheeks as he looked up.

“In truth, thou seemest like one; for thy face is not less fair than thy voice,” said Monseigneur. “And, pray, who has taught thee so to sing?”

“No one, Monseigneur; no one has taught me to sing,” answered Gerald. “But there are voices around me sometimes,—strange, sweet voices that I hear only when I am sad. I cannot tell where they are, but I listen to them, and they tell me I must sing, that I must sing always to be happy.”

Monseigneur looked a moment in surprise at the fair fanciful boy talking dreamily as if to himself, and then he asked with a smile,—

“And have thy fairy voices taught thee to be happy, too?”

“No,” returned Gerald with a soft sigh. “No one is always happy, I think.”

“It is no matter, if one can sing like thee; for thou canst sing, my lad, as but few people sing on earth.” And the old man’s eyes grew kind as he laid his hand gently on Gerald’s head, and added, “On my faith, thou shouldst have a master.”

“A master?” said Gerald, questioningly. “What does Monseigneur mean?”

“I mean, my pretty one, that thou must go to the great city and be taught by a famous maestro in the art of singing. Thy voice should make thee great.”

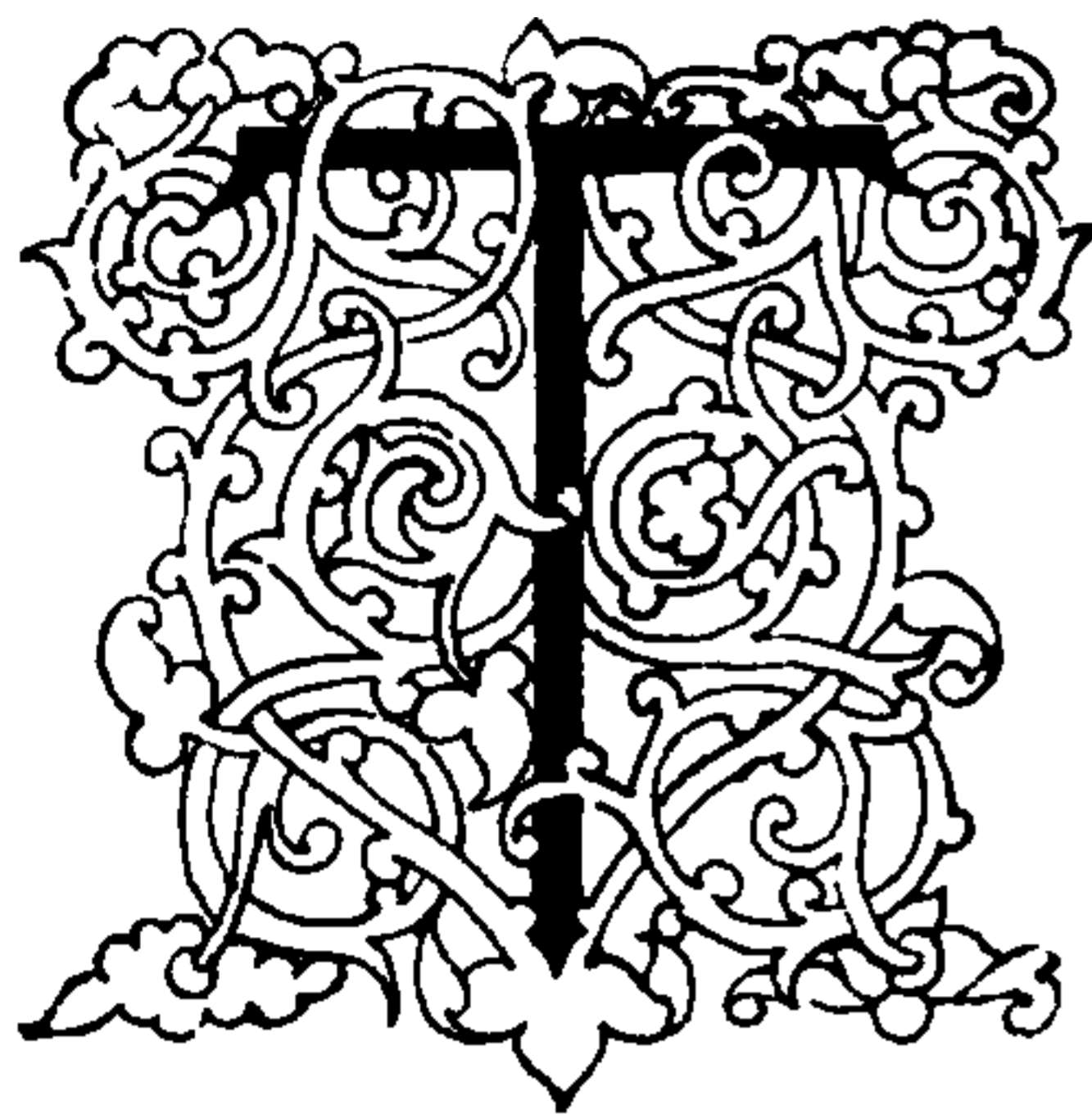
Gerald’s heart beat quickly, his eyes grew dark, and a look of unspeakable joy lighted up his features as he looked up

into the face of the old man, and said earnestly, "Oh, Monseigneur, if it could only be!"

There were times when the love of his art possessed him, when Gerald's face wore an exalted look that seemed almost divine, a quick flash that for a second transformed him into a different being. Monseigneur saw it in the look that followed that simple childish utterance, and Gerald's fate was sealed.

It takes less than a word, sometimes, to change the whole course of a life, less than a look to steer that fragile bark—human destiny—into an unknown sea, whose tide we cannot stem. Human lives are full of crises, and there is a strange, mysterious doom that leads us, even in childhood, to choose one path from which we may never turn back.

## CHAPTER IV.



THEY walked on, the old man leaning on the boy's arm, away from the gray château, and toward the little cottage; and Marjorie followed them in silence, neither taking any heed of her. And they talked much of the things that Gerald loved to hear,—of the wonderful things in the great city, of the lads who sang at the cathedral, and how people came from miles around to hear them, and how sometimes they were sent to sing before the Pope himself at his great palace, and how he rewarded them with gold crosses and large sums of money.

This to Gerald seemed the sweetest and kindest fate that could be bestowed on any mortal, and quite compassed his ideas of greatness. And Monseigneur enjoyed his eagerness so, and waxed so earnest in relating these things, that one might have thought he had been a lad himself, and a singer as well.

But Little Marjorie heard nothing of what they said; her heart was filled with strange forebodings. She tried to think of Gerald's happiness, of the pleasure that had brought back his sweet, alluring smile, and the look of love in his eyes. But she knew that this look and this smile were not for her. She could not tell why it was, but she felt that she had been suddenly shut out of all his happiness, and she was more forsaken than ever.

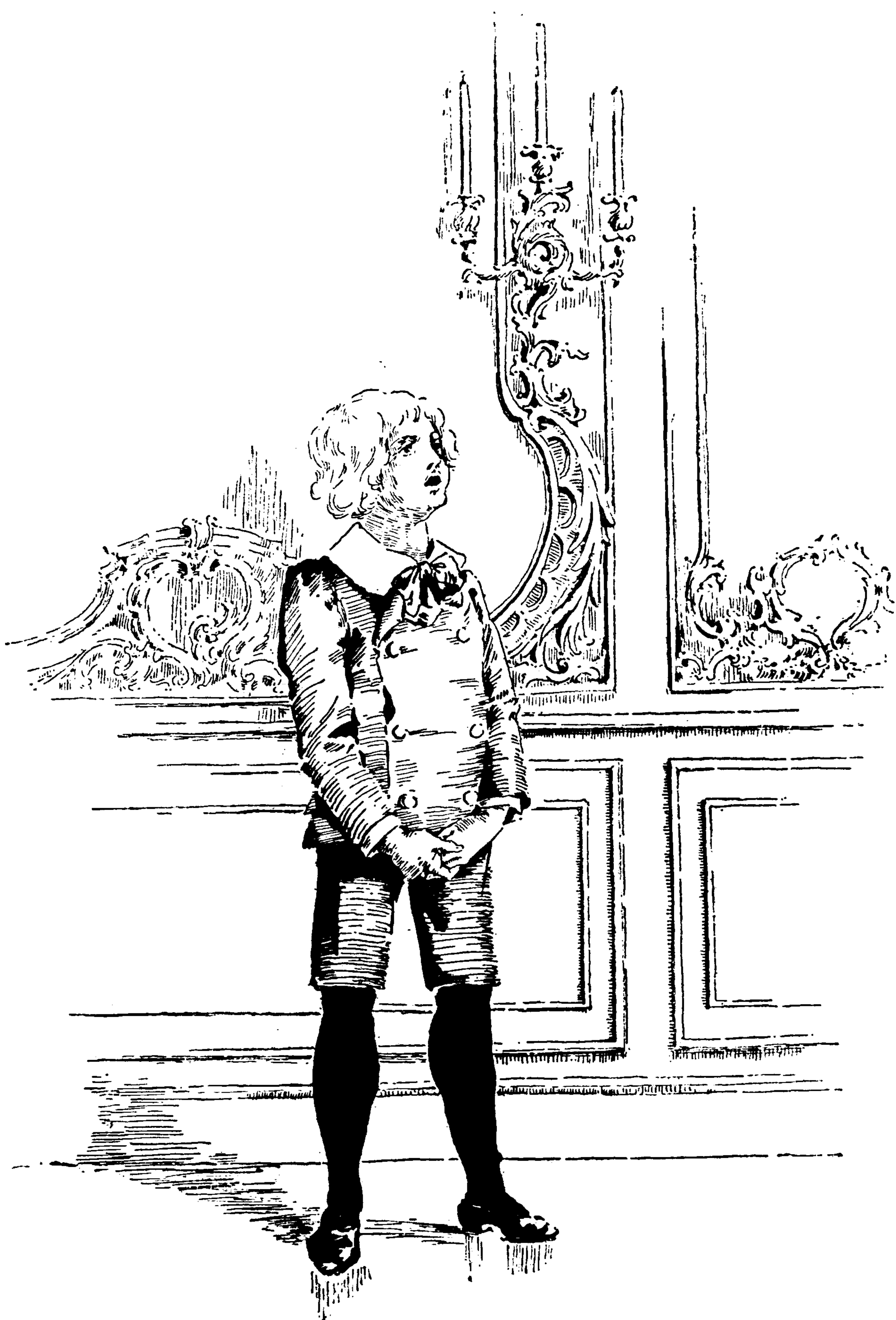


For several days after, Gerald was in a dream of delight, so that he quite forgot to be cross with Marjorie. Monseigneur came to the little cottage, and talked a long time with Mademoiselle, and then Gerald was called in and told that on the morrow he would sing at the château before a number of great people, whom Monseigneur had bidden to come and hear him. And when Monseigneur went from the door of the little cottage, he turned again and kissed Gerald on the forehead, and placed a gold coin in his hand, the largest and brightest that Gerald had ever seen.

And then all Marjorie's sad misgivings had vanished; for she knew now that all

was well, and that Heaven had indeed smiled down upon the fortunes of her darling; and no one was so happy as she, not even Gerald himself. Marjorie had never a thought for herself, nor a joy nor a hope save in him; and the one purpose of her life was the well-being of the brother, not one of whose gifts she envied.

As Gerald had said, it was a great day for them, indeed, when he sang at the château, and he looked very beautiful as he stood there, underneath the brilliant lights of Monseigneur's salon, his fair face flushed with expectation, and his large soft eyes resting on the crowd around him. Young as he was, and little used as he was to the presence of strange and great people, there was no diffidence in his manner, no fear



“HIS FRESH YOUNG VOICE RANG OUT AND FILLED THE GREAT



written on his childish face. He bore himself already like a master,—a master of a great art; and like a true master he was armed with confidence, the weapon of genius. Every one admired him; it was impossible not to admire Gerald. For besides his loveliness of feature and form, there was in his face that indescribable charm of youth, which, in gifted and sensitive natures, seems to outlast all others.

But when his fresh young voice rang out and filled the great hall with its sweetness, when all the listeners pressed around him in astonishment, when he was applauded and praised so much that the blushes came thick to his cheeks, it was then that little Marjorie's heart overflowed with joy and pride in him,—a joy that made her forget everything

but his presence and the great happy thought that he was hers to love and to glory in always.

Oh, Marjorie! our fairest ideal is but the shadow of what we love reflected by our own fancy, in the flush of youth and hope; it is but a flashing dream, bright, sweet, and full of comfort, but followed by a bitter waking. We may not in this world behold it face to face; for this is a world of realities, which for hope hath no reward, and for dreams no fulfilment.

Yet Little Marjorie lived a world of happiness in those few short moments, when her beloved stood there in all his simple grace. She could only look at him; her heart was too full to speak; but all that she might have said went out to him in that look of infinite ten-



“ SHE SAW BEAUTIFUL LADIES SPEAK TO HIM.”



derness. She saw those great people rise and go to him as with one impulse. She saw beautiful ladies speak to him and smile, some bending down to kiss him, and some caressing his bright curls. And Monseigneur smiled at him, too, as he had not smiled at any one for many a day, and called him a glorious lad. And Gerald sang again and again all the little simple songs he knew as if he had been inspired; and he was as happy as ever people are at the dawn of their first great triumph.

All the way home that night, as they walked together under the stars, Little Marjorie was weaving a golden web of fancy. She was living already in that happy future, which now seemed very near, when Gerald would be great, when the whole world should know his name

and hang on the spell of his magic voice. She saw him honored and exalted and welcomed everywhere; she saw him great among the great. And in her simple heart she saw him too smiling down upon her, and loving her through all his greatness. Ah! how many times afterward did Marjorie remember that happy, happy night and wish that she had died then, — died in that hour when she was wrapped in the mystic veil of hope.

When they reached the little cottage, Gerald and Marjorie sat for a long time before the fire, thinking of the great change of fortune that had just come to them. It was very strange; they could scarcely understand it. Only a few days before they had been so alone, so hopeless, and then, suddenly, everything was changed, and their future looked bright

and promising. To Gerald it seemed as if the dream of his life was being realized. For just before they left the château, — he and Marjorie, — Monseigneur had taken him aside and told him something strangely delightful. He had not spoken of it to Marjorie yet; for she would ask so many questions, — girls were such curious creatures, — and he wanted to enjoy it alone first of all; and he grew so excited for thinking of it that all sleep forsook his eyes. He sat there silently, looking into the yellow flame with the far-away dreamy look in his blue eyes, and he smiled a little, as if he saw something pleasant ahead. Marjorie sat near at his feet looking at him, following his every thought with eager hungry eyes, and worshipping him. How she did love him that night, — her proud, handsome

brother! How she did long to say something that would tell him so, and show him how great she thought him; how she believed and trusted and hoped in him!

But Marjorie had learned, alas! that however anxious Gerald was for the plaudits of the great world, her praise and her admiration were little to him. Perhaps it was because she gave them so freely; perhaps because she was only an insignificant little girl,—Marjorie could not say. But she knew that she would have given worlds for a word of praise from him, or an approving smile.

Yet that night her heart was so full of joy that she could not leave him without a tender word.

“Dearest Gerald!” she said, softly; “you sang so beautifully! I am so proud of you, and I love you so! please, please



“ MARJORIE SAT NEAR AT HIS FEET  
LOOKING AT HIM.”



say you love me a little," and she laid her cheek fondly on his arm and held him close.

"Oh, Marjorie, don't be a foolish girl!" returned Gerald, impatiently. "You know very well that I like you, but I don't like you when you are silly."

"It is not silly for me to love you, Gerald."

"But it is selfish of you to trouble me when I am thinking. You always do it, Marjorie. Now go away and leave me, do!"

"Forgive me, dear, I do not mean to trouble you or to be selfish. I only want you to know how much I love you, and I cannot help saying it, Gerald."

"Oh, forgive you! forgive you! You are always wanting to be forgiven, and then doing the same sins over. I should

think if you cared for me you would try a little not to annoy me so."

"I do try," returned Marjorie, with a choking sob. "Oh, I do try; but—but Gerald, you are not always kind to me;" and she hid her face in her hands, afraid of what she had said; and all her happiness was gone because of his cruel words.

Gerald could not brook the suggestion of a reproach. To his eyes his conduct was blameless. Had he not promised that Marjorie should live with him when he was great! Had he not allowed her to love him? What more could she expect! His proud spirit rose like a flash; for Gerald had a quick, excitable nature, which, according to his mood, could be roused by a single offenceless word; and it was Marjorie's misfortune that

despite the deep love she had for him in her heart, she was the one to draw down this ill-will upon her innocent self. Gerald truly believed that he was a good brother to her,—had she not said it herself a hundred times! and that she should now reproach him with unkindness was a great sin. He pushed her away and said angrily,—

“It is a great pity you have such a heartless brother, indeed, and perhaps you will be glad enough when you have n’t him any more. I think I’ll go away and leave you, I really do.”

“Don’t say that!” cried Marjorie, in alarm; “don’t say it, Gerald; I could not live without you; indeed, I could not.”

“Then why do you vex me and cry at nothing? You know very well I hate to see you cry. If you knew how hid-

eous it makes you, perhaps you would not do it so often."

Marjorie was very miserable. She held up her white arms, imploringly,—

"I did not mean it, dear Gerald; you are very good to me, and I love you!"

"But *I* do not love *you*," he said, severely; "and I am going away, to-morrow, to leave you."

"Gerald! Gerald! You must not go—you must not go away from me. I am all alone in the world; I have no one but you; I should die without you."

"No, you would not," he answered coldly; and he rose and walked away with the hard, bitter look on his young face.

Marjorie stood looking at him vacantly, silent and stupefied with grief. She had neither courage nor strength to run up

to him and make him forgive her. Always before she had pleaded with him and brought back a smile or a kind word to his lips; and their sad time had ended in her kissing all his angry thoughts away. But to-night the sound of his words rang in her heart with a terrible, cruel meaning; and he seemed to have taken with him all her strength and hope. Only a moment ago she had been so happy; and now the world was cold and dark, and she was alone in it.

Some hearts, especially those of the young, are unsympathetic in their prosperity. They forget the hands that have labored for them, the willing sacrifices that have been made for them; the loving words of praise that have cheered and encouraged them,—often the very ones that have helped them to success, Heaven

forgive them! Gerald thought no more of Marjorie after he had left her. For some hours longer he lay dreaming of his good fortune, of the happiness in store for him; for Monseigneur had really told him that on the next day he was to go to the great city to be taught until he should become the greatest singer in the world. It was his reward for having sung so well at the château; or for having a winning face and sweet blue eyes, perhaps; or for having been such a good brother to Marjorie,—who shall say? Gerald did not trouble himself with this problem; he only smiled at the pleasing visions ahead, and fell at last into a quiet sleep.

But Marjorie had no pleasant dreams to look forward to. She had only the memory of a sickening sorrow, and a dull aching feeling at her heart; and she

could find no rest till she had gone to her brother's little room, and had softly crept to his bedside, and given him the gentle kiss that his hardness of heart had forbidden her. And when she saw him lying there sleeping so peacefully with the hopeful smile resting on his face, she believed that in his heart he had forgiven her, and she was comforted.

The morning came, and with it Monseigneur. It was a cold, gray, dismal morning. The little cottage never looked so bare, and the moaning of the tall poplars was never so sad as on that morning when Marjorie saw the great carriage roll up to the garden-gate, and her brother Gerald disappear within it, and the black horses gallop away so fast, as if they never cared that they were taking from her the dearest thing of her life! She

stood watching them alone, holding her heart, following them with her eyes till they had vanished in the distance, and the sound of the rumbling wheels was heard no more—and so she lost him.

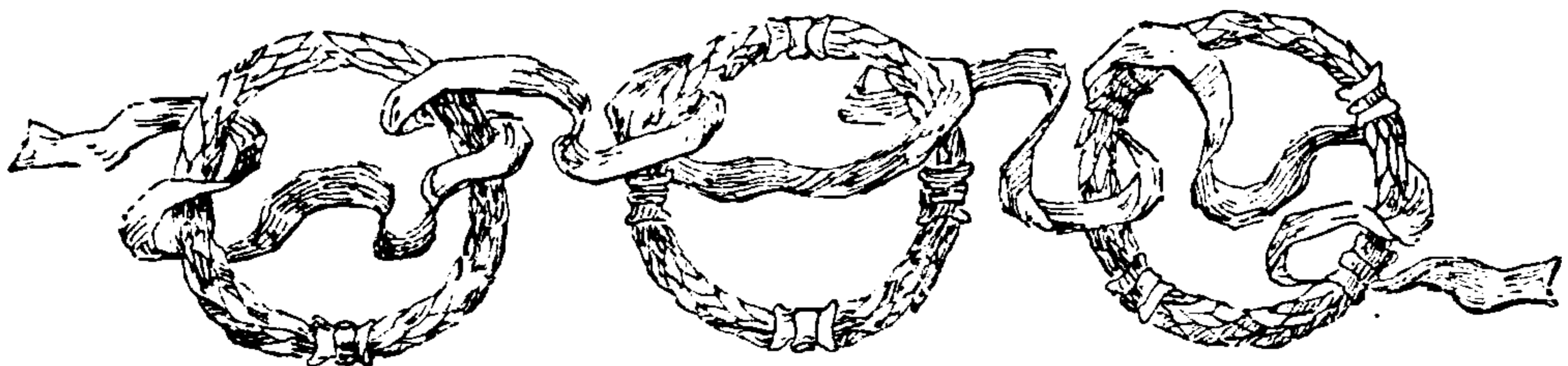
Ah me! What a dreadful day it was! How the rain fell; and how poor Little Marjorie's tears flowed! Gerald was gone—gone from her with never a word of forgiveness: she could think of nothing else. Yet in her grief she loved him and blamed herself and could see no wrong in him. Ah, most blessed, most perfect, truest love, that stands alone, steadfast amid the wrecks and disappointments of human affections, and wavers not in its fidelity! No, there is not in all the world a stronger or purer or more enduring love than this.

Gerald as he was,—Gerald the thoughtless, selfish brother, the cause of all her heartache,—had no place in Marjorie's memory now. She could only think of him as he had been in the days of his innocent babyhood; she remembered only the beautiful child who had loved and trusted her, and gladdened her own troubled childhood. She lived over and over again in her fancy all the little tender things he had said to her; the fond caresses and bright glances that had penetrated her, and suffused her soul with a strange sweet happiness. Absence is a great reconciliator,—it makes us forget the sorrows of the past, and live only in the memory of hours made bright by gentleness and love. And Marjorie had but one sorrow now,—that of being parted from him, and the

dread that she might never see him more; while all the rest faded out of her heart like a dream.

It was very dreary without Gerald; and Marjorie wandered from the blue lake to the green mountains, and found no cheer. She could not look upon the things they had loved, however beautiful they were, without that strange, choking, deathly pain wringing her heart. She could not see the familiar places where they had been so happy together without feeling that she was alone and wretched now; and there was not a thing or a place in her life but was linked with a thought of him. She never lived a day but it brought back some recollection bitter or sweet, to flood her young soul with new misery. Her eyes grew darker and sadder with

tears, and her thin sweet face was almost transparent in its whiteness. And the good village people who were wont to see her standing at dusk beside the little garden-gate shook their heads sadly, and said "Poor little soul!" more than ever, and almost hoped that the morrow would find her in a happier world. But Marjorie lived on a vain and foolish hope, as many a one has done, — the hope that sometime she should stand there and see her brother Gerald coming back to her; coming to love her and make her happy.



## CHAPTER V.



YEAR passed wearily on, and then another; and it was nearing Christmas-tide. Marjorie had had no message from Gerald through all this long time, for Monseigneur had not returned, and people seldom went to the great city: it was a long distance away, and the roads were dangerous. But one day the little village was all astir with the news that a young lad whom every one had known as a pretty fair-haired boy had found favor in the great city with his singing; that indeed

his voice was the talk and wonder of all the people; that he was going to sing in the Mass at the Cathedral on Christmas Eve, and that crowds of people would come to hear him.

Marjorie heard it all, and listened with a fluttering heart. Could it be her brother Gerald? She felt sure it must be he. Who but Gerald was beautiful, and had a marvellous voice? The old longing rose strong and wild in her poor heart at the thought of his triumph,—the longing to see his dear face again; to hear him sing; to meet the look of pleasure in his eyes, for Gerald was always happy when he sang. Perhaps, too, he would be glad to see her,—it was such a long time since they were parted from each other! And he might want to love her now that he was happy, if

he had not forgotten her. But then, he might have forgotten her! There had been times, many times, when she had sickened at this thought; and there had been days when Gerald seemed so far away that she felt she should never see him again. But there had never been an hour when she had forgotten him; and she comforted herself with the belief that though his love was different, it was not less true than her own.

But Marjorie had not lived in a great city, with its pleasures and excitements and its ever new people; she had not been singing before a great maestro, who told her a hundred things to turn her young head; she had not been caressed and flattered by people whom it was an honor to know; she had not been rocked in the hope of becoming some

day a great artist. Marjorie had only stayed in the little village with Mademoiselle; she had had but one image before her, and but one hope,—that of being sometime good and strong and wise enough to please Gerald; and when at last she heard of his fair fortune, it seemed as if all her strength and hope were armed for one great effort to go out into the world alone, if need be, and never rest till she had found him. It was a wild and desperate thought; but desperate thoughts come to us all when we are in great trouble, and she could find no peace while yet this vague hope flitted before her. She brooded over it by day and dreamed of it by night, and could not bear the thought of going back to the old life of dreary waiting: she would go to him now, and never leave him more.

Early one bitter morning in the heart of December, Marjorie left the little cottage where she had spent her childhood, — the home that was linked in her mind with all the joy and sorrow of her young life. She looked back to it with a vague feeling that she should never see it again; and a flood of memories came crowding upon her and overwhelmed her heart. The wind blew icy cold; the snow fell in blinding flakes, burying all trace of the roads; the waters of the blue lake were frozen into a solid glare, and were cold and unresponsive to her look of tearful farewell. The little world she was leaving behind slept quietly; there was not a living thing astir on this bleak wintry morning, — only a little girl with a pale anxious face and wildly beating heart, hurrying, hurrying, she



“THE LITTLE WORLD SHE WAS LEAVING BEHIND SLEPT QUIETLY.”



scarce knew whither. She did not think of the distance between her and the great city; she did not think of the tediousness of a day's journey on foot across a rough and rugged country; she did not care that she had no food to stay her failing strength, and but scanty clothing to shield her from the cruel cold: the thought of seeing Gerald, of listening to his voice again, soon rose above every other thought, and made her strong and brave. She beguiled the dreary hours with fair day-dreams soon to be realized; she was dreaming of what their meeting would be, of all that she would say to him. Would he be glad? Would he take her into his arms and kiss her? Ah, yes; she was sure he would. And she would say, "Gerald, dear, dear Gerald, I am sorry!"

and he would look at her in his fond old way, and call her his dear, foolish Marjorie. And then he would take her into the great Cathedral with him; and when he sang it would be all for her; and when the Mass was done they would walk away together, as they had done that night from the château, to the place where Gerald lived. It must be a beautiful place, for Gerald was so great and famous already. She could almost see how he would look when she told him how wretched she had been; and how he would laugh his clear, merry, ringing laugh, and say it had all been a hideous dream, and that now she was never to leave him any more, — and the thought of it all so thrilled her that she cried a little for thinking of her happiness. Marjorie was too

young, too strong in faith, to accept sorrow as a reality; she did not know that sorrow is the only thing in this world that is real,—the only thing that stays and clings to us, and will not be put away, not even by the hope of a coming joy.

Marjorie traversed the dark mysterious woods, so still and lonely, where no sound broke the awful stillness but the wild moaning of the wind through the naked trees, and the tread of her weary little feet as she made her way over the icy twigs. She did not stop to rest or refresh her faint young body; she did not think of the pain she felt now, for the great longing that was in her heart. If Gerald had known what Marjorie went through in that dreadful day, what suffering of soul and body she bore for

his sake, his heart, selfish and hard though it was, would have melted, I think, for very pity of the wretched little sister whose only sin was to love him.

But at that very hour, when Marjorie was journeying wearily toward him, Gerald was full of the glories of the coming night, and Marjorie had long since ceased to have any place in his thoughts. He was to sing at the Cathedral; he, the youngest of the choristers, was to lead the midnight Mass, and sing alone the Agnus Dei. It was a great thing indeed, for he would be rewarded handsomely by the maestro if he did his best; and he was proud and happy, as he had cause to be had his great gift left room in his heart for aught that was grateful and tender.

But Gerald's nature had neither gratefulness nor tenderness in it; and though his art was the gift of Heaven, it never raised him from his earthly longings into a world of eternal peace.

At length the day darkened, and the moaning of the wind was hushed, and the sky grew dark and angry with clouds, and the killing night-frost fell like a mantle over the cheerless earth. Marjorie hurried onward, out of the gloomy forest into the deepening twilight. She was still a long way from the city; it was snowing very fast, the roads were impenetrable, and she could see nothing for the darkness. Her strength was failing, and despair seized her; she uttered a low cry, and sank for a moment by the roadside — but only a moment, to rest and think, to pray for help from

Heaven. Just then she heard a distant chime of bells pealing out the Angelus. It was a blessed sound, the only familiar thing that had crossed her path through that long and dismal day, and it fell on her drooping spirits like a ray of hope. She listened to its faint echoes, and they seemed to be calling her as they died away on the night. It was the bell of the great Cathedral.

A minute later the light of a lantern shone across the road, and an unsteady-footed mule went by pulling a little cart with a single traveller in it. Marjorie rose to her feet and called out to him.

“Stop! oh please stop!” she cried tremblingly.

“Well, what now?” said a gruff voice, and the little cart stood still.

“The way to the city—if you could tell me—please,” said Marjorie, faintly.

“There’s only one way,” said the man, “and it’s a bad one.”

“How far is it?” asked Marjorie.

“More than a league, maybe; there’s no telling, a night like this.”

Marjorie groaned, and the man bent down to look at her. The white snow reflected the rays of light from the lantern, and showed him a face so worn and suffering and yet so childlike that he uttered an oath by way of astonishment and sympathy.

“And now, whither?” he asked in kinder tones.

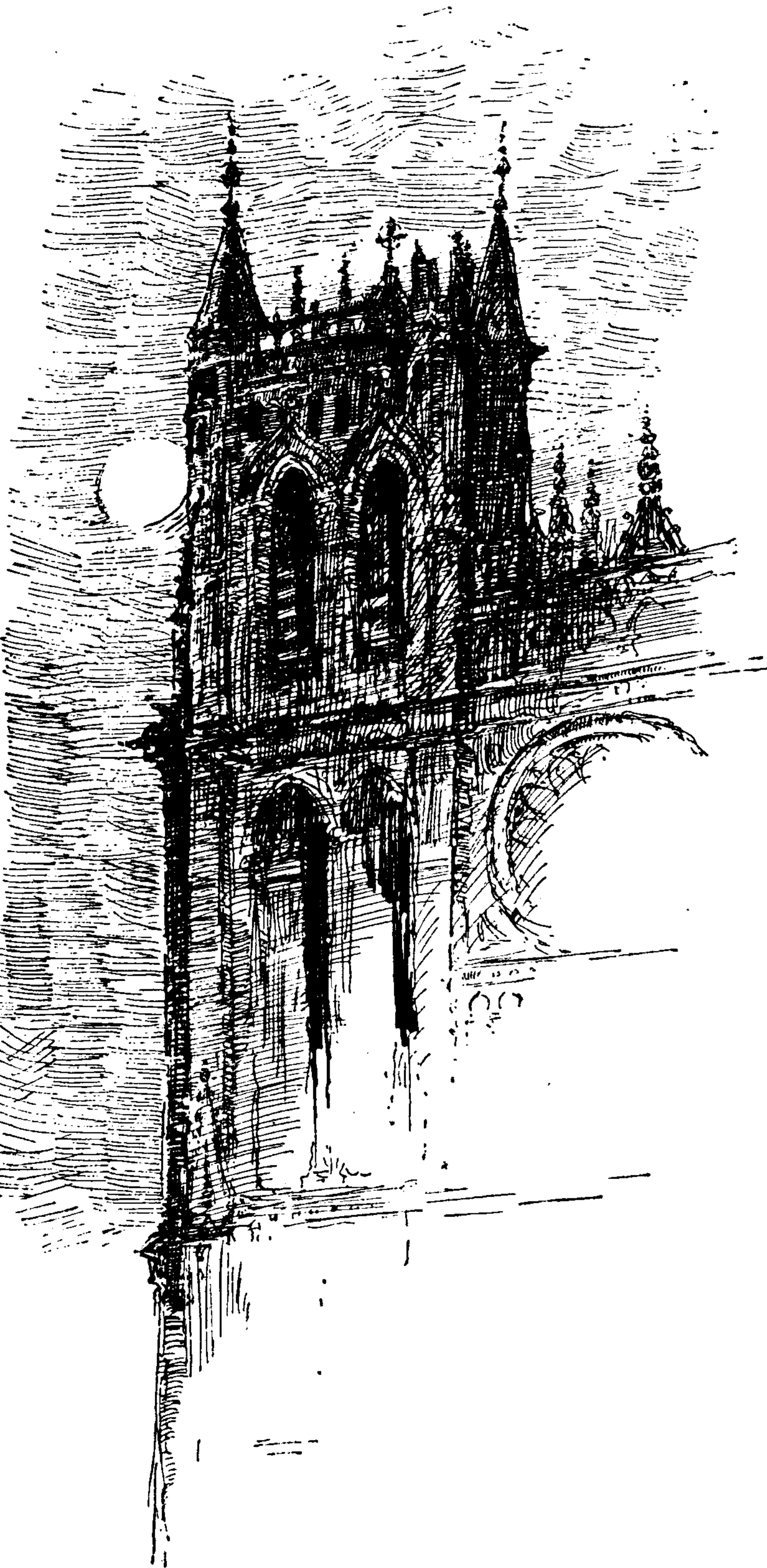
“To the Cathedral,” answered she, “to hear the midnight Mass.”

“That’s not my way,” returned the man; “but I’ll take thee to the city, and

thou canst find thy way to the church after if thou art fool enough to travel all this way for a drop of holy water. I'd never have gone a step in thy place, not for the Saint Peter himself, in a hurricane like this;" and he lifted her into the cart less roughly than his voice had sounded.

Marjorie allowed him to put a little bundle of straw under her head, and to throw his leather jacket over her shivering limbs; and then the mule took up its slow uncertain tread again, and they moved on in the darkness.

It must have taken them a long while to make that league or more, for by the time they reached the outskirts of the city the snow had ceased falling, and the stars were shining through the broken clouds, and Marjorie knew that she had been sleeping. Now they had



crossed the bridge, and were nearing the heart of the busy city. Marjorie's eyes looked round her in astonishment; she was bewildered by all the strange new sounds,—the rumble of carriages, and the tramp of horses' feet over the icy pavements, and the ringing and clanging of church bells, till

the air seemed wild and crazy with noise. She saw the long white street with its double rows of lamp-posts shedding their lurid light on the streams of people moving beneath them, and the thought of finding her way through that multitude made her heart beat frightfully.

Presently the cart stopped, and the driver made as if to wake her, rapping with his stick on one of the wheels.

“Where are we?” asked Marjorie.

“We are here,” rejoined the man, and he pointed to where the gaunt gray towers of the Cathedral rose against the star-lit heavens.

“Oh, thank you, thank you, for bringing me so near,” cried Marjorie, her heart leaping for the sudden joy. “I have no

money, but I will pray to the blessed saints for you; I—” and her grateful tears fell fast.

The carter moved off quickly, clearing his throat the while; but he looked back once to see Marjorie's little figure losing itself in the crowd.

She drew near the steps of the old Cathedral. The portals were not yet opened, but she could see the soft red lights falling from its gothic windows against the dark gray walls. It could not be far from midnight. Crowds of people were there already, pushing forward and eager to be the first to enter. No one but Marjorie seemed to know what a bitter night it was. The people she saw were wrapped in soft rich cloaks, and came with light steps and happy faces,

for it was Christmas Eve. Marjorie wondered if she would find a place in the great Cathedral,—a little place, where she might hide herself and still see Gerald when he sang!



## CHAPTER VI.



**I**T was not long before the doors were opened, and the aisles filled rapidly with worshippers. Marjorie looked in wistfully. Twice she crossed the threshold of the great door, and came back with her courage all gone. But at last she took heart, and braved herself with the thought that Gerald too would be there soon; and that thought drove away all her fears. And then, were not even the great churches open to all—to the rich and poor—on Christmas Eve?

She went in, and knelt beneath a picture of the blessed Christ holding a tender lamb in his arms; and as she raised her eyes to the divine face, she felt that surely He would help and comfort her.

The high altar was all aglow with burning candles, and the flowers and the incense mingled together in a holy fragrance. On the left was the shrine of the Blessed Virgin, and straight in front of where Marjorie knelt was the *crèche* where the Infant Jesus lay on a rude bed of straw, surrounded by so many dazzling lights that the little marble figure seemed warmed by them into life and color.

Marjorie covered her face with her hands, and prayed out of the earnestness of her soul a long wordless prayer,—a prayer of thanksgiving that she was here at last in this haven of rest and peace.

Suddenly the tones of an organ broke in upon the sacred stillness, and swayed their melody out into the world of worshippers. The High Mass began. The white-robed choir took up the Kyrie Eleison, and a mighty chorus of angel voices swelled to the vaulted roof of the ancient Cathedral. Softly, sweetly, mystically, a single voice rose high and clear above the others. It soared and soared like some happy winged thing; it sailed forth into the quivering air with flute-like strength and sweetness, beyond the realms of earthly music till the great chorus with the sound of its hundred voices died away to a murmur that seemed only to blend its harmony to the magic of that one pure strain. It was a young voice; a voice that thrilled the souls of men as a sudden burst of light from heaven might; a voice rich

and full as a woman's, and as sweet as a seraph's song.

A mist rose before Marjorie's eyes, her head swam, her breath forsook her, and she lay with her head resting on the little stool before her. No one saw her; no one knew that she had fainted. When she recovered her consciousness the Mass was nearly done; but there before her was that same radiant vision,—a fair, proud being arrayed in a robe of dazzling whiteness, and looking to her bewildered eyes like some celestial creature. There was no mistake; it was Gerald, her own dear Gerald. He stood there singing alone: “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi—”



And the same silvery notes rang out

upon the air, rising and falling in liquid cadence, and filling the great vast with its marvellous sweet melody.

Only a boy, with a face like an angel and a voice pleading for the sins of the world,—a voice laden with infinite sadness and love; and yet his own heart as cold and compassionless as the chill mantle that covered the earth without.

Ah me! that a gift like this should have strayed into a human erring soul! that a thing so heavenly as music should be fettered to weak and sinning mortality! And yet there are many such,—many whose hearts are the temples of this great and glorious gift, and yet where it must needs dwell side by side with all that is unfeeling and unholy. It is the strangest and saddest of mysteries!

The people sat utterly spellbound till the very last note had died from Gerald's lips. For a full minute the great church was steeped in breathless silence. It seemed as if time stood still, and all forgot to worship in the wonder that followed. When the benediction was said and the crowd had passed out of the long aisles, and the white-robed choristers had disappeared in the sacristy, Little Marjorie was still kneeling with her eyes fixed on the spot where Gerald had stood, seeing nothing but that beloved face, hearing nothing but the echo of his music in her heart. A moment later some one was putting out the lights in the Cathedral, and the world was growing dark again for her. She rose and went out into the cold night to wait for him. She would watch on the church



“SEEING NOTHING BUT THAT BELOVED FACE HEARING NOTHING BUT



steps till he came by, and then she would go to him and call him by name and he would know her. Weak and trembling she stood behind one of the gray stone pillars, while the cruel wind blew and the thoughtless multitude passed on, taking no heed of the miserable little figure. She waited a long time till she was nearly fainting with the dread that she might have missed Gerald in the crowd and perhaps lost him, when a number of gay, light-hearted boys came trooping out at the old churchyard gate. They were singing and cheering noisily, and Gerald's name was caught up and carried loudly from mouth to mouth. They came nearer and nearer, till, in the last rosy stream of light that fell from the Cathedral windows, Marjorie caught sight of her brother's fair head towering above all the others.

She stepped forward breathlessly, and her heart began to beat very wildly. All her strength was leaving her. She tried to call him, but her voice was gone. Would he go by without seeing her? She descended to the very last step; some one brushed rudely by and turned round to look at her, and then called out jeeringly, "A beggar! Away with the beggars on Christmas Eve!"

They all went by her with the cry, but the last — the tallest of the lads — stopped and leaned over her as he passed. Marjorie paled beneath the sight of those blue eyes. She put out her trembling hand.

"Gerald! Gerald!" she whispered.

Gerald's eyes rested upon her but a single moment, — one cruelly short moment, while his heart stood still; and then he turned them away, those handsome

heaven-born eyes,—turned them away from her forever. He drew up his proud young head, and a strange, wondering smile played about his features,—and the next instant he was gone, crying with the rest, “A beggar! Away with the beggars!” He had done better to plunge a dagger into Little Marjorie’s heart.

She crept back and hid herself like some wounded thing. She laid her little head on the gray stone. There was nothing left to her but loneliness and misery. Gerald had seen her, and known her, and forsaken her. She had waited these long years, she had walked that weary way, only to be with him, and he had turned away from her in shame. She sank upon the hard cold stones, so weary, so hopeless, so broken-hearted!

And there was not a human hand to comfort her.

But the angels above, whose loving mission it is to care for the forsaken, had pity on her when mortals would not. In their arms, tenderly, lovingly, they bore her pure white soul heavenward, and Little Marjorie, whose life had known no joy, awakened at last amid the glories of an eternal Christmas morn.

Ah, beautiful, beautiful waking! Blessed recompense that comes soon or late to those who suffer! Let us not weep for Little Marjorie as she lies there beneath the arch of the gray Cathedral and the cold bright stars shed their light upon her peaceful face; the memory of her earthly love is dead, and all her earthly sorrows are done.

That night Gerald found no rest. His dreams were haunted by that tender image and its look of yearning love. When the morning came, and the sun rose over the white world, and sweet sonorous bells rang out the gladness of the Christmas-tide, it brought no joy to him. The cruel look and words that had broken Little Marjorie's spirit were eating their way into his own heart. Early he walked out toward the Cathedral, led by a strange longing to see the place where she had been, perhaps to find her there waiting for him still; for beggars often slept at the doors of the house of God when they could find no other shelter in the great city. He would go to her and comfort her, he would take her to him and ask to be forgiven, for Marjorie had always been willing and

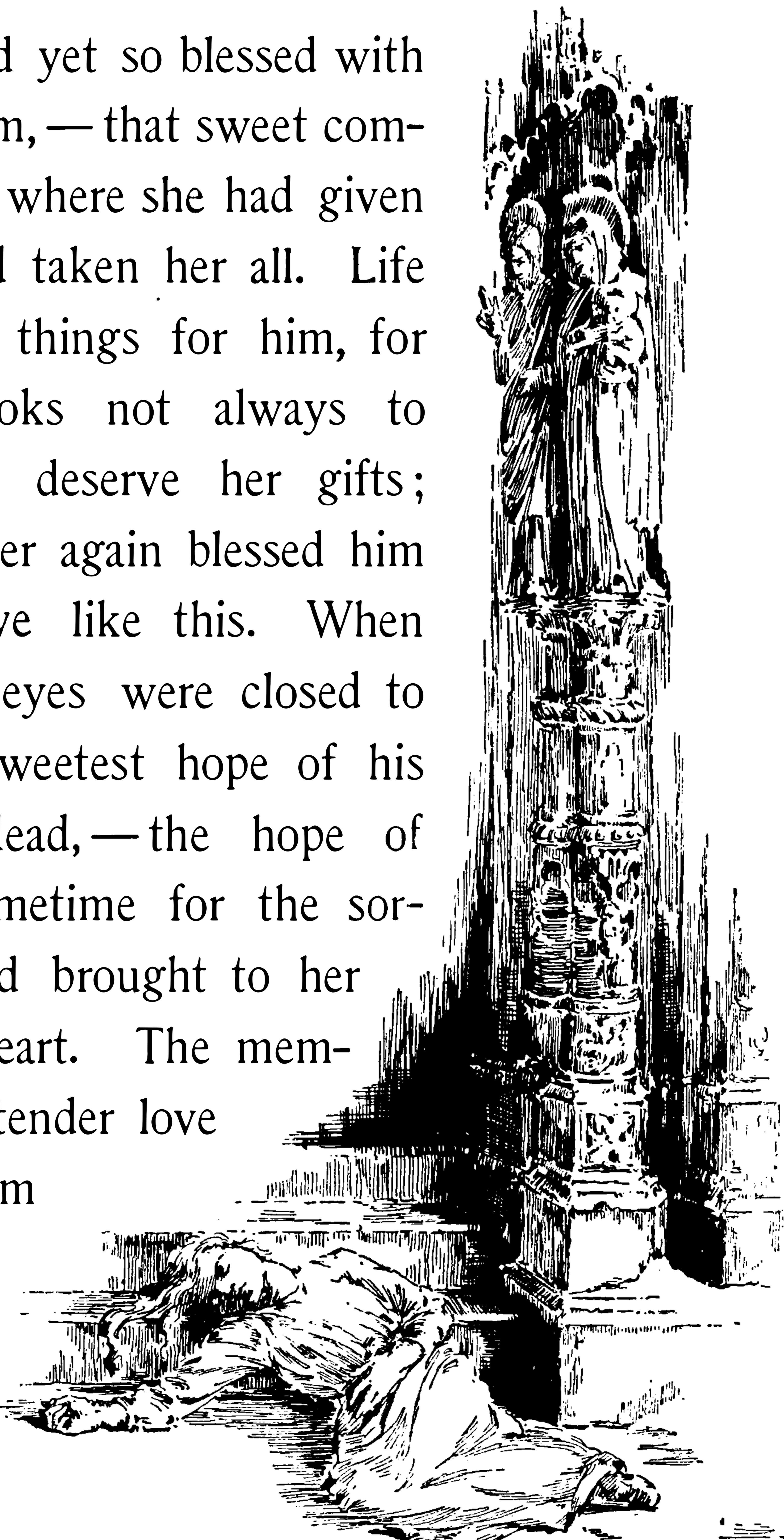
glad to forgive him; and in the bitterness of his repentance he was already giving her all that she had so needed, unbidden.

But what he found when he reached the steps of the Cathedral was the aged sexton kneeling beside a little figure lying lifeless at the foot of the gray pillar. He saw a little face not more pale in death than it had been in life, but from whose features every trace of sorrow had vanished. He saw the face of Little Marjorie as it had always been to him, full of sweetness and gentleness, with the patient smile upon it that had been his only rebuke,—a face that in its glorified repose said only—

“It is too late!”

Gerald never grew out of the memory of that early childhood, so strangely

isolated and yet so blessed with love for him, — that sweet companionship where she had given and he had taken her all. Life held great things for him, for fortune looks not always to those who deserve her gifts; but it never again blessed him with a love like this. When Marjorie's eyes were closed to him, the sweetest hope of his life was dead, — the hope of atoning sometime for the sorrow he had brought to her unselfish heart. The memory of her tender love clung to him through all the hours of his great-



ness ; and when the dreams of his worldly ambition were fulfilled, and the reward of his great gift came to him at last, he knew, and he knew truly, that no recompense had been sweeter and no gift more precious than the love of Little Marjorie.

THE END.

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